



# Inside CFSA

*For Our Child-Serving Community*

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## November is National Adoption Month **More Than 300 Children Gain Permanent Homes This Year; 1,000 Still Wait**

After suffering physical abuse from a drug-addicted parent, Devon, age 7; Cassandra, 6; Melinda, 4; and Cedric, 3, entered foster care through CFSA.\* Initially, the children were placed in two separate foster homes. But when one of these placements disrupted (through no fault of the children), CFSA and the court decided to place these siblings together while redoubling efforts to find a permanent home for them.



### **Love to Spare**

While the social worker, just back from court, was relaying this information to CFSA Foster/Adoptive Parent Recruiter Gwen Menefee, Gwen's telephone rang. The caller was a local man who, with his wife, had adopted a two-year-old boy from CFSA 10 years before. Their son was now a healthy, happy 12-year-old who loved math and spending time with his friends.

"Gwen, we just saw 'Wednesday's Child,'" the man said, referring to WRC-TV's weekly feature about local adoptable children. "We very much want to adopt again." Gwen's heart leapt. "Let me tell you about four wonderful children who need you so much," she offered.

Four children! The couple hesitated briefly, then agreed to meet the children in a low-key way during Family Night at the group home. When three-year-old Cedric approached, looked up at the couple, and asked, "Mommy?," their hearts melted. Although it required moving to a larger house, this

family had more than enough love to go around. Devon, Cassandra, Melinda, and Cedric are now on their way to becoming permanent members of a strong, nurturing home.

### **Celebrating Adoption**

This true local story with a happy ending is just one of over 300 adoptions CFSA and D.C. Superior Court will finalize in 2002. All these adoptive families will be celebrated at the third National Adoption Day in Court Nov. 23 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the H. Carl Moultrie Courthouse. This annual event, partially funded by The Freddie Mac Foundation, allows the public to witness the final step in the adoption process: the adoption decree. Nearly 20 adoptions will be finalized at the Nov. 23 event.

This year, Freddie Mac is seeking to draw national attention to the 131,000 American foster children available for adoption. (About 1,000 of those are in the District.) Mayor Anthony Williams is expected to join a host of corporate, foundation, and public VIPs at a 9:15 a.m. press conference to kick off National Adoption Day. While the venue will be local, the hope is to achieve national media coverage.

### **Adoptions Increasing**

Adoptions are on the rise in the District, largely as a result of the new Family Court and stronger working relationships among CFSA, the court, and the Office of Corporation Counsel, which represents juvenile wards of the District. Improved focus and cooperation is moving children through legal aspects of the adoption process more quickly. However, the essential first step continues to be the willingness of community members to open their hearts and homes to District children waiting and hoping for a "forever family." For information about adopting, please call **(202) 671-LOVE**. ■

*\*Names of the children have been changed to protect their privacy.*

## **News Shorts**

- While CFSA's probationary period under the *LaShawn* lawsuit is ending, provisions of the Federal Court's Modified Final Order (MFO) in the lawsuit must still be met. District and CFSA officials and the Court Monitor and the plaintiffs have negotiated an interim performance plan that will carry CFSA through the next few months. During this period, CFSA will be working with the Court Monitor and plaintiffs on a full implementation plan.
- CFSA's two-day Kinship, Foster, and Adoptive Parent Licensing Fairs in October and November attracted 268 participants in Maryland. CFSA provided assistance to help foster parent move towards getting licensed.

Services provided included: scheduled fire inspections, first aid training, finger printing, assistance with competing applications, in-services training, etc.

- On Nov. 1, CFSA launched a new case practice process that emphasizes collaboration on case plans among the agency, providers, and the family; improved documentation; and firm deadlines for case planning and administrative reviews. CFSA Quality Assurance described the new process to providers at their regular meeting Nov. 14. Additional meetings with providers and other partners are being planned. ■

*CFSA faxes and/or emails this newsletter monthly to providers and other partners. To offer comments or to update your fax number, call (202) 442-6174.*